

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUEBEC 00051 071920Z
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INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY
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AMCONSUL TORONTO POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0051

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, CA
SUBJECT: LABOR AND THE P.Q.

REF: QUEBEC 22

1. SUMMARY: PRESS RELATIONS OFFICERS OF THE QUEBEC TEACHER'S UNION (CEQ), HUBERT SACY, DISCUSSED TRENDS IN QUEBEC LABOR WITH US ON JANUARY 31. OF GREATEST INTEREST WERE SACY'S VIEWS ON RECENT CEQ DECISION OF COOPERATE WITH PARTI QUEBECOIS GOVT. (REFTEL) THIS DECISION WAS BROUGHT ON IN PART BY DOCUMENT PREPARED BY SACY IN WHICH HE CALLED ON CEQ TO REJECT MARXIST IMAGE AND ADOPT "FAVORABLE ATTITUDE" TOWARDS PQ GOVT. SACY EXPRESSED VIEW THAT MAJORITY OF RANK AND FILE ARE ALREADY FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARDS PQ. THUS, UNION LEADERS ARE FORCED COOPERATE WITH GOVT OR RISK WRATH OF THEIR MEMBERS. HOWEVER, SUCH COOPERATION IS NOT FAVORED BY GROUP OF VOCAL RADICALS WHICH HAVE CONTROLLED CEQ'S POLICY-MAKING MACHINERY AND WHO GAVE UNION MARXIST IMAGE. HENCEFORTH, THEIR POWER TO STEER CEQ INTO CONFRONTATION WITH GOVT WILL BE LIMITED AS WILL BE THEIR VOICE IN FIXING UNION POLICY. SACY ADDED THAT SUPPORT FOR PQ WITHIN CEQ IS SO SUBSTANTIAL
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 QUEBEC 00051 071920Z

THAT SHOULD PARTY DECIDE MOBILIZE ITS SYMPATHIZERS, UNION LIKELY ADOPT PRO-INDEPENDENCE STANCE. CEQ PRESENTLY DEBATING THIS QUESTION AND IS EXPECTED ISSUE POLICY STATEMENT NEXT FEW MONTHS. END SUMMARY.

2. RECENT MEETING OF CEQ'S GENERAL COUNCIL WHICH DECIDED MODIFY CEQ'S RADICAL IMAGE AND SET COURSE FOR COOPERATION WITH

PROVINCIAL GOVT WAS REPORTED EARLIER IN REFTTEL. WILL RE-CALLED THAT DOCUMENT PREPARED BY PRESS RELATIONS OFFICER HUBERT SACY FOR THIS MEETING PRECIPITATED DEBATE WITHIN COUNCIL ON QUESTION OF SUPPORT FOR PQ GOVT. SACY TOLD US HE BEGAN PREPARATION DOCUMENT SHORTLY AFTER UNEXPECTED PQ ELECTION VICTORY PUT UNION IN UNCOMFORTABLE POSITION OF OPPOSING GOVT ELECTED AND SUPPORTED BY MAJORITY OF CEQ RANK AND FILE. SACY CLAIMED THAT SINCE PULBICATION OF DOCUMENT, HE HAS RECEIVED HUNDREDS OF MESSAGES FROM TEACHERS ACROSS PROVINCE SUPPORTING HIS CALL FOR OPEN SUPPORT OF PQ. SACY ESTIMATED THAT AT LEAST ONE-THIRD OF CEQ MEMBERS ARE MEMBERS OF PQ WHILE AN EVEN LARGER PERCENTAGE SUPPORT PARTY.

3. WHILE CEQ COUNCIL MEETING BALKED AT FORMALLY ENDORSE RESOLUTION FAVORING QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE. ACTIVE DEBATE ON SUCH A RESOLUTION IS CURREENTLY IN PROGRESS WITH UNION AND A DECISION WILL PROBABLY BE TAKEN WITHIN SEVERAL MONTHS. SACY NOTED THAT MAJORITY OF CEQ, HIMSELF INCLUDED, PRIVATELY FAVOR INDEPENDENCE. HE EXPLAINED THAT TEACHERS, FROM WHOM "CULTURE" IS SUCH A VITAL INTEREST, SEEK INDEPENDENCE AS MEANS OF ASSURING FRANCOPHONE CULTURAL INTEGRITY. ONCE INDEPENDENCE IS ATTAINED, SACY OPENED, THE CURRENT ATTITUDE WHICH PERCEIVES LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A THREAT IS LIKELY TO DISAPPEAR.

4. AT PRESENT, MAIN OPPOSITION TO PRO-INDEPENDENCE STANCE COMES FROM MILITARY LEFT WING OF UNION WHICH FINDS QUESTION IRRELEVANT TO GOAL OF "SOLIDARITY OF ALL WORKING CLASS." SACY CLAIMED UNION COULD EASILY ADOPT PRO-INDEPENDENCE POLICY IF PQ SUPPORTERS IN UNION WERE MOBILIZED BY PARTY. HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 QUEBEC 00051 071920Z

THAT PQ HAD LITTLE NEED TO SEEK OVERT CEQ SUPPORT SINCE CEQ MEMBERSHIP ALREADY" IN THE PQ BASKET". HE SAID CHARRBONNEAU WHOM HE DENIED IN LEADER OF CEQ'S LEFT WING, AND FELLOW LEADERS WERE BEING VERY CAREFUL NOT TO OPPOSE LEVESQUE AND RISK OPEN REVOLT AMONG THEIR RANK AND FILE. SACY PREDICTED CONSULTATIONS ON "NATIONALIST QUESTION" WILL ARISE WITHIN QUEBEC'S TWO OTHER UNIONS CENTREALS, QFL AND CNTU. HE SEES STRONG SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENCE AMONG CNTU AND QFL MEMBERS. QFL OPENLY SUPPORTED PQ IN NOV 15 ELECTIONS. HOWEVER PRESIDENT LOUIS LABERGE ANNOUNCED HIS UNIONS OPPOSITION TO PQ GOAL OF INDEPENDENCE AS SOLUTION TO PROVINCES LABOR ILLS.

5. IN SPITE OF FACT THAT ONLY QFL OPENLY SUPPORT PQ IN ELECTIONS, SACY MAINTAINA THAT IN PRIVATE, ALL THREE QUEBEC UNION CENTRALS WERE DELIGHTED WITH ELECTION RESULTS - NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE OF DEFEAT OF UNPOPULAR LIBERALS BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF VICTORY OF PQ. SACY REMARKED THAT A UNION NATIONALE VICTORY WOULD HAVE PLEASED NO ONE IN LABOR MOVEMENT. UN IS VIEWED BY LABOR AS MOST REACTIONARY AND LEAST DESIRABLE OF MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

IN PROVINCE. SACY DISMISSED FORMATION OF "QUEBEC WORKERS" PARTY"
AS GOAL OF LABOR MOVEMENT. HE SAID SOME 25 LEFT-WING POLITICAL PARTIES

HAD COME UPON PROVINCIAL SCENE AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER-SEVERAL
CLAIMING TO BE "QUEBEC WORKERS" PARTY." ALL HAD MET WITH FAILURE.
HE HASTENED TO WARN, HOWEVER, THAT CONTINUED DOWNTURN IN QUEBEC
ECONOMY WITH CONSTANT HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT COULD FIRE SUCH ASPIRA-
TIONS AND LEAD TO A SOCIALIST PARTY SOME TEN YEARS DISTANT.
SACY DESCRIBED QUEBEC LABOR MOVEMENT AS A POLITICALLY
"DESTRUCTIVE FORCE" WHICH, WHILE IT WAS UNABLE TO FORM OR
ELECT A PARTY ON ITS OWN, WAS CAPABLE OF DESTROYING ONE. HE
CITED AS AN EXAMPLE LABORS' 6 YEARS OF "CHIPPING AWAY"
AT BOURASSA AND LIBERALS.

6. ON QUESTION OF UPCOMING ECONOMIC "SUMMIT" MEETING TO BE
HELD IN MARCH (QUEBEC 26), SACY SAID CEQ WAS PLAYING GAME
OF WAIT AND SEE. HE EXPLAINED THAT, OF ALL UNIONIZED WORKERS
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PAGE 04 QUEBEC 00051 071920Z

IN PROVINCE, CEQ ONLY REPRESENTS SMALL PERCENTAGE-COMPOSED
ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY OF TEACHERS. LIKEWISE, CNTU MEMBERSHIP IS
STRONGEST AMONG HOSPITAL WORKERS BUT OF NO GREAT SIGNIFICANCE
IN INDUSTRIAL SECTOR. HE NOTED THAT QFL AND SEVERAL INDEPENDANT
BRANCHES OF CANADIAN OR INTERNATIONAL UNIONS HOLD VIRTUAL
MONOPOLY IN THIS IMPORTANT AREA. THUS, SACY MAINTAINED, IN
ANY UPCOMING CONFERENCE ON WAGE RESTRAINTS GOQ REALLY MUST
DEAL MAINLY WITH QFL. TEACHERS AND HOSPITAL WORKERS SIGNED
LONG-TERM CONTRACTS JUST LAST YEAR. THUS, THEY ARE NOT EX-
PECTED TO POSE FURTHER DEMANDS IN THE COMING YEAR.

7. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION, SACY THEORIZED ON US REACTION TO
PQ AND QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE. HE SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW, U.S. WOULD
HAVE NO PROBLEM ACCOMODATING TO AN INDEPENDENT SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
QUEBEC ON NORTHERN BORDER. WHEN CONGEN OFFICER EXPLAINED
INAPPROPRIATENESS FOR HIM TO COMMENT ON CANADIAN INTERNAL
AFFAIRS, SACY REPLIED THAT THAT WAS JUST WHAT LEVESQUE WANTED
NEUTRAL US STAND. HE STATED THAT HE FELT QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE
WOULD BE ACHIEVED WITH JUST SUCH "SILENT ACQUIESCENCE" ON PART
OF US.
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